

Forum: Social, Cultural and Humanitarian Committee (SOCHUM)

Issue #2: Measures to address the global epidemic of human trafficking, particularly in the context of forced labor and the exploitation of women and children

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Introduction

Human trafficking is a global issue that has been evolving throughout the years, with consistently rocketing rates. It can be seen in various forms, including the exploitation of women and children and forced labor or marriage. Despite nations' efforts to suppress the issue, numbers of human trafficking victims have escalated every year. The International Labour Organization (ILO) and the Walk Free Foundation, in partnership with the International Organization for Migration (IOM), released *Global Estimates of Modern Slavery* in September 2022, estimating that approximately 27.6 million people were in forced labor (US Department of State). Although human trafficking affects everyone, despite their gender, age or race, the boundless rates of trafficking of women and children have caught the eyes of many nations. Globally, 71% of trafficking victims were women and girls, compared to the 29% who were men and boys. Additionally, 37% victims of trafficking in forced marriage were children and 21% victims of sexual exploitation were children as well (Stop the Traffik), depicting the vulnerability of women and children in regards to human trafficking.

Consequently, all nations are obligated to the responsibility of providing protection for these victims as well as future victims who are vulnerable to such

risks. If nations overlook this obligation and are not willing to take associated measures to this issue, it will result in detrimental consequences and hold back the process of suppressing this global issue. Alongside nations' need to take protective measures on behalf of this concern, it is crucial for governments to come up with resolutions to decrease the rates of human trafficking and create a safer environment for their citizens to live in. These could include strengthening law enforcement, raising awareness regarding the issue, establishing a collaboration between NGOs and governments or addressing the root causes of human trafficking.

Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic has been affecting countries across the globe ineffectively and putting them under enormous strain in regards to both the political and criminal aspects of a country. Although extensive measures were taken to flatten the infection curve, such as enforced quarantine, travel restrictions, and limitations on economic activities and public life, the pandemic has been ongoing for a substantial amount of time. While at first glance, these enforcements that increased police presence at the borders and on the streets seemed to diminish the crime of human trafficking, they may have aggravated the crimes even more (UNODC). Despite the possibility that trafficking in persons have decreased amidst the pandemic, criminals have been executing their "methods" through the "new normal" created by the pandemic; the abuse of modern communications technologies. They are now able to target a larger number of victims globally using social media networks and recruitment websites. This especially endangers children due to their increasing exposure as potential victims of crime on social media, and requires urgent solutions to protect them (UNODC). Due to these "new normal" implemented through the global pandemic, rates of human trafficking of children and women have risen immensely and deeply ingrained economic and social inequalities that are among the root causes of human trafficking (UNODC).

Definition of Key Terms

Human Trafficking: the trade of humans for different purposes, such as; forced labor, sexual activities (sexual exploitation), slavery, etc. This mainly occurs with children and women.

Forced Labor: Any type of work or service which is forced on any person under the threat of a penalty. This person has also not volunteered themselves to do this job.

Global epidemic: an issue that spread out throughout the whole world. In this case the widespread of human trafficking around the world.

Exploitation: The act of using someone against their will, for your own benefit or profit.

Human rights: Rights every human is entitled to, which includes the freedom of slavery, forced labor, and exploitation.

Children and women: two of the main groups in which are affected by human trafficking. Mainly towards sexual exploitation and forced labor.

Sex trafficking: the action of illegally transporting people from one country or area to another for the purpose of sexual exploitation.

Red light districts: Area of a town or city containing many brothels, strip clubs, and other sex businesses. (high risks of trafficking)

Sexual exploitation: Actual or attempted abuse of someone's position of vulnerability

General Overview

How human trafficking affects different parts of the world

Human trafficking is the trade of humans for any purpose such as slavery, sexual exploitation, forced labor. The main groups affected by human trafficking are women and children in countries of high rates of poverty. There's an estimated 30 million victims of human trafficking around the world. These people are mothers, daughters, who are forced to do activities against their will. The countries with the most amount of human trafficking are located in Asia, in cities where poverty takes over most of the population. This women are put in a vulnerable situation where in most cases the activities against their will consist of rape, sexual/mental abuse, forced labour, etc. Some places where human trafficking can be seen are: in legal and illegal labor industries, the drug trade market, massage sites, nail and hair salons, restaurants, motels, clothing factories, etc. This issue does not impact only the victims, but also the victims families, and the communities they live in.

Prevention efforts

Multiple NGOs, governments, and international organizations around the world speak up about this issue, and try to prevent, protect, and help these victims. This also includes raising awareness over this topic, and the dangers that trafficking has. Also it's important to talk about the rights these vulnerable and underprivileged groups of people have, and help them understand them. Some important protection measures are: health care, housing, security and legal support, among other things. Also it's important to keep these traffickers accountable for their actions, and prosecute them over their crimes.

Examples of high rates of human trafficking around the world

Countries such as China, India, Iran, Russia are amongst some of the countries with the highest rate of human trafficking around the world. These regions have always known to be dangerous, and a site where forced labor, sexual

exploitation were very popular. According to worldbank " Over 150,000 people are trafficked annually in South Asia—women and girls make up 44% and 21%, respectively, of trafficking victims." This group of people are forced to work for hours without getting paid, or some of these children are being exploited and their bodies are used in sexual activities. These are just a few of the examples of some countries around the world, but it is important to understand and know that every country has a trafficking problem, no matter the amount of people involved.

Major Parties Involved and Their Views

China

Having a rank of Tier 3 in the Trafficking in Persons Report by the U.S. State Department, The People's Republic of China does not fully meet the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking and is not making significant efforts to do so (U.S. Department of State). China, with 3.2 million victims, comes second in the worldwide list of sex trafficking. In China, women and children are particularly vulnerable to trafficking, especially in the forms of forced sexual exploitation, forced labor, or forced marriage. Additionally, in recent years, there has been an increase in the trafficking of women from neighboring countries, such as Vietnam and Myanmar, into China; specifically for forced marriages. According to the U.S. Department of State, for five consecutive years, the PRC government did not report complete law enforcement data, nor did it report identifying any trafficking victims or referring them to protection services.

India

India is a prime transit and destination country of human trafficking. The U.S. Department of State exemplified a study estimating a minimum of 14 million human trafficking victims in India, being the country with the highest human

trafficking cases. As a result of gender-based discrimination, human trafficking, specifically in the form of forced marriages and sexual exploitation, has become the norm for traffickers. Lack of education and awareness makes women and men from low income and less privileged backgrounds vulnerable to human trafficking while children are already easy to prey on (Borgen). According to an article published by Borgen Magazine, India recognized a 27.7% increase in the cases of trafficking from 2020 to 2021. Furthermore, the U.S. State Department in its 2022 Trafficking in Persons Report ranked India as a Tier 2 country, suggesting that “India does not fully meet the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking but is making significant efforts to do so.”

United States

It is estimated that between 15,000 to 50,000 women and children are forced into sexual slavery in the United States every year (Deliverfund). According to the American Bar Association, The Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) of 2000 established methods of prosecuting traffickers, preventing human trafficking, and protecting victims and survivors of trafficking. The act establishes human trafficking and related offenses as federal crimes. The United States has made continuous efforts to suppress the increasing rates of human trafficking in their nation, and has succeeded in doing so.

Russia

Despite the staggering rates of human trafficking victims in Russia, the government has made little efforts in creating a body to monitor its anti-trafficking activities or make annual assessments recording its performance. During the most recent report on human trafficking cases in 2019, the Russian government reported identifying 5,882 victims of human trafficking, an increase from the 4,811 victims identified in 2018. Within these 5,882 victims, the majority were Russian citizens, although there were victims from Uzbekistan, Ukraine, and

Vietnam as well. The most common forms of trafficking in Russia were labor exploitation, sexual exploitation, and the trafficking of children; frequent in children in state care or orphanages. It was also found that the majority of trafficking cases in Russia were carried out by organized criminal groups. As a result, campaigners in Russia are striving for the adoption of a law to combat human trafficking (The Lancet).

Syria

Since 2018, Syria has remained on Tier 3 of the Trafficking in Persons Report; mainly due to the lack of significant efforts to combat the issue. In spite of the violent conflict that has continued to escalate the magnitude of human trafficking crimes within Syria, the government has made no distinguishable anti-trafficking law enforcement efforts (U.S. Department of State). Decree No. 3 of 2010 criminalized some forms of sex trafficking and labor trafficking, however, due to its unclear definition of human trafficking, these punishment were not correspondent with those prescribed for other related crimes, such as rape. In turn, the Syrian refugee population has been highly vulnerable to sex trafficking and forced labor, not just in their country, but also in neighboring countries, particularly Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq, and Turkey. Furthermore, the government and Pro-Syrian regime-affiliated militias forcibly recruited child soldiers, allowing children to face extreme violence and retaliation by other conflicting parties (U.S. Department of State).

Iran

Despite being a state which is ruled by Islamic fundamentalism, there has been a dramatic increase in human trafficking during recent years; particularly in cases of prostitution. According to researchers, there has been a 600 percent increase in prostitution, the practice of engaging in sexual activity with someone for payment, in recent years. The average age of prostitution has dropped to 16

and girls as young as 10 years old are being sold (Human Trafficking Search). Moreover, there have been reports of Iranian women and girls being trafficked to other countries in Gulf states, for forced labor or sexual exploitation. Following these substantial amounts of reported cases, more Iranian government officials are being involved in heading prostitution rings and trafficking rings.

Timeline of Events

Date	Description of event
1500-1866	The period known as the Transatlantic Slave Trade where 12.5 million slaves were shipped from Africa around the world. 10.7 million arrived in the Americas, including the Caribbean, South America, and North America. Between 300,000 and 400,000 thousand enslaved Africans arrived in North America.
1807	Britain abolished the slave trade through The Act of Parliament.
1820	The Missouri Compromise forbids slavery in the Louisiana territory north of Missouri's Southern border.
1866	The last reported transatlantic slave voyage.
1850-1900	The Chinese began arriving in the United States in significant numbers in the mid-1800s through the promise of lucrative jobs associated with the California Gold Rush and the construction of the Central Pacific Railroad. During this, Chinese women were illegally trafficked into California and the American West by Chinese gangs called Tongs.

- 1900-1910 Following the abolition of the African slave trade, white slavery took place, where European women, often immigrants, were ensnared in forced prostitution.
- 1904 The Mann Act, or the International Agreement for the Suppression of "White Slave Traffic," focusing on migrant women and children was signed as the first international agreement on human trafficking.
- 1919 The formation of the International Labor Organization. Its aim was to provide protective standards for working conditions such as pay and hours.
- 1921 With the issue of "white slavery" being changed to "traffic in women and children", 33 countries signed the International Convention for the Suppression of Traffic in Women and Children.
- 1949 The United Nations adopted the United Nations Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others.
- 2000 The United Nations adopted the United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children. This was the first consensus that acknowledged modern-day slavery, as well as the possibility of men being the victims of human trafficking. The definition of human trafficking was also expanded to include organ harvesting (the illegal practice of surgically removing one's organs against

their will), slavery, and forced labor.

2007 The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) launched the United Nations Global Initiative to Fight Human Trafficking (UN.GIFT) which highlighted a renewed commitment by world leaders to combat human trafficking.

UN involvement, Relevant Resolutions, Treaties and Events

The United Nations has made several attempts to stop and start addressing this issue. Some of this involvement include: plans of actions, speeches, protocols, created multiple SDGs to help reduce this problem. For example: in 2010 the United Nations assembly made a global plan to combat the issue of human trafficking around the world, and to protect these victims. Also there have been multiple protocols that provide guidelines for the prevention of these actions, etc. The United Nations created the agency UNODC, which is the main agency that fights human trafficking. This agency provides assistance to the victims and also protects. Also created an event called " World Day Against Trafficking in Persons", which this year helps provide awareness to this problem. Overall the UN involvement has been a huge factor in this issue, and has helped many women, and children around the world.

Evaluation of Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue

Human slavery is once more an appalling reality in the world today. 2.4 million have been trafficked worldwide, and of these, 600,000 to 800,000 are trafficked across borders each year and 12,000 children are working as slaves on plantations in West Africa (United Nations). It is impossible to reach unanimity on the exact scope of the issue but, regardless of the figures, what matters is that human trafficking is only getting worse. Occurring on a daily basis on every continent and in almost every country, no nation can claim to be entirely

unaffected by this crime. Taking this into account, the United Nations has implemented various policies and protocols regarding this issue. For example, in 2000, the United Nations launched the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, which initiated a victim-centered approach to trafficking. It has since been signed by 177 countries. 3 years later, the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings indicated a step towards greater cooperation and dedication within Europe. In recent years, the UN Human Rights Office has helped several countries in Africa to educate gendarmerie and border control officers about international and regional human rights treaties regarding people on the move, and to strengthen their capacities to protect and identify human rights violations (OHCHR). Additionally, in 2018, the UN Human Rights Office, alongside the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) has launched the first Civil Aviation Authorities and Airlines Forum on Human Trafficking. With awareness-raising messages being broadcasted in airplanes and developing e-learning courses for cabin crew on identifying victims of trafficking, the UN has taken positive steps in incorporating human rights in their responses to trafficking.

Possible Solutions

Although the UN involvement has helped this issue in so many ways, there are still some more solutions that could help this issue stop once and for all. These solutions include: even more awareness. Some people, specially people that are not properly educated or conscious of how big this problem is, are the ones in the bigger risk of being human trafficked. Government officials, the media, organizations need to speak out about this problem more constantly and remind the people how dangerous this issue is. Providing support to the victims is also something that every country should have. Victims of human trafficking suffer from trauma; some might have been injured physically, and some might

suffer mentally. These victims need support medically, legally, counseling, help with safe housing, etc. There's not one possible solution to this problem, but helping these victims, supporting them, and finding the root of the problem and stopping these criminals are all things that can help minimize the number of victims worldwide.

Sustainable Development Goal (SDG)

This issue is strongly associated with the Sustainable Development Goal of decent work and economic growth, which strives to “promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all”. As a global crime, human trafficking is used in almost every continent by exploiting people for the purpose of profit. From illegal brothels to legalized red light districts, human trafficking has endangered and lured various citizens into exploiting themselves; sometimes without realization. By initiating new statutes and abolishing the issue of human trafficking, it will guarantee safety of the future generations as well as provide protection to victims of human trafficking; including job opportunities.

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Appendix

- I. <https://www.state.gov/humantrafficking-about-human-trafficking/#:~:text=The%20International%20Labour%20Organization%20>

- A. Link showing what human trafficking is, where it came from, and also how it impacts places worldwide, specially USA.
- II. <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/human-Trafficking/Human-Trafficking.html>
- A. Link to the United Nations official website. This website talks about the protocols, what it is, all the actions taken to stop this issue, and many more important information.
- III. <https://www.stopthetraffik.org/what-is-human-trafficking/definition-and-scale/>
- A. Link to a website with a thorough explanation of what has been made to stop these issues. The history behind it, where it started, etc.
- LINKS TOWARDS SPECIFIC COUNTRIES:
- IV. <https://www.state.gov/reports/2022-trafficking-in-persons-report/syria/>
- A. Link to the explanation of this issue and its impact in Syria.
- V. <https://www.walkfree.org/global-slavery-index/2018/findings/country-studies/russia/>
- A. Link to the explanation of this issue and its impact in Russia.
- VI. <https://www.borgenmagazine.com/human-trafficking-in-india/#:~:text=Lack%20of%20education%20and%20awareness,to%202%2C%20189%20cases%20in%202021.>
- A. Link to the explanation of this issue and its impact in India.
- VII. <https://theexodusroad.com/human-trafficking-in-brazil/>
- A. Link to the explanation of this issue and its impact in Brazil.